What Parents and Carers Need to Know about ...

SOCIAL MEDIA SCAMS

On any social media platform, you'll often come across links to genuine-looking websites. They might include an exclusive offer for one of your favourite shops or invite you to complete a quiz in return for a particular reward. In some cases, clicking on these links takes you to a fake website where you are asked to provide your personal details. The whole enterprise is a ploy to capture sensitive details, such as your email address and password, which the scammers then exploit at your expense.

Clickjacking for fake rewards

Here, the attacker tries to lure you into clicking a link by offering something in return, such as a free gift for completing a survey. However, when the link is clicked, it collects the details of whoever fills out the survey. This might include full names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. Scammers could use these to hack into your other accounts or simply sell your data to other criminals.

Malicious app downloads

Some cybercriminals design software that appears genuine or helpful (and is normally free) but has been created to steal your personal information. There may be a pop-up ad encouraging you to download and install the app. Once the app is downloaded, the attacker can see any personal credentials you enter, and could then use this information for their own gain.

'Payment first' scams

Prevalent on sites such as Depop, these scams have spread to Facebook since it added the Marketplace feature. A user lists an item for sale and requests payment up front. Most online stores work this way, but the crucial difference is that scammers ask for payment via PayPal friends and family – *not* goods and services. This means you can't dispute the payment: the scammer keeps your money, and you never receive the item.

Threats disguised as quizzes

Most quizzes on social media seem harmless, but many come with hidden threats. When you submit your answers, you're also agreeing to terms and conditions which – in some cases – allow the quiz developer to sell your details to third parties. This puts you at greater risk of phishing attacks and spam advertising emails. It might also give the app permission to use information from your profile.

Untrustworthy URLs

It's common on social media for URLs in posts to be shortened (to meet Twitter's character count, for instance). This may seem harmless, but it opens an avenue of attack for scammers who may be disguising a malicious link as legitimate. These links can install malware on the victim's device, which could lead to passwords being stolen or even be the precursor to ransomware attacks.

Angler phishing scams

Using a fake corporate social media account, the scammer pretends to be from customer services. When someone complains about customer service on social media, the fake account messages them asking for their name, phone number and email. If the user provides this info, they are directed to a fake website where they enter their login details. The attacker can then steal their credentials or infect their device with malware.

Advice For Parents & Carers

Set strong passwords

Always ensure that your passwords are not easily guessable. Try to use a mix of letters, numbers and special characters so that criminals cannot forcefully get control. You should also change your passwords every so often to provide further protection against your accounts being taken over. If you have any concerns about your account's privacy, change the password.

Review your privacy settings

Regularly review your privacy settings on social media. You can restrict which parts of your profile can be seen and by who. We recommended making your personal information only visible to friends, which will help to limit the information a scammer could find out about you from social media. It's also safest to only accept friend or follow requests from people that you actually know.

Protect your personal information

Never enter personal information on unfamiliar websites. If you were redirected to a site from a social media post or an email link, putting in your personal details could give key information away to a scammer. Fraudsters may pose as someone you know to try and get your address or bank details (or your family's). If this happens, block the user and tell your family, so the scammer can't try to deceive anyone else.

Avoid opening suspicious emails

When you get an email, always check the sender's address before opening it. If it's an unexpected email and the sender is a stranger, mark it as junk (in case they try again in future) and simply delete it. They could be a scammer who's simply seen your email address on your social media profile. Being aware of phishing attacks is the primary method of defence against scam emails like this.

Choose trusted download sources

Don't download apps or files from unknown sites – instead, use verified and trustworthy sources (such as Google Play or the App Store for download to mobile devices). You can recognise safe sources by their trust seals. The browser address bar on a secure site starts "https" instead of "http". A shield or lock symbol in the address bar also indicates that a site is secure.

Install anti-virus software

Another key tip is to ensure that you have robust and reliable virus protection installed on any of your devices that support it. Anti-virus programmes will help to insulate you against cyber-attacks by blocking any malicious downloads or detecting any recently downloaded malware and removing it. Update your virus protection software regularly and carry out frequent scans of your device.

Meet Our Expert

Formed in 2016, KryptoKloud provides cyber security and resilience solutions to its customers. With offices in the UK, the company offers managed service operational packages including cyber security monitoring and testing, risk audit, threat intelligence and incident response.

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